



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
D.M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Application Number: 2306026
Applicant: Dale Phinney for SHDP Partners
Address of Proposal: 11011 Meridian Ave. N.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Master Use Permit to establish use for future construction of a three-story, 69,000 sq. ft. medical office building with 3.5 levels of below grade parking for 277 vehicles and 54 surface parking spaces. The project includes demolition of a 10,000 sq. ft. restaurant building.

The following approvals are required:

Design Review - Section 23.41, Seattle Municipal Code.

Administrative Conditional Use - To allow a Medical Services Use of more than 10,000 sq. ft. within 2,500 feet of a Medical Major Institution Overlay District Boundary. SMC 23.47.006.

SEPA - Section 25.05, Seattle Municipal Code

SEPA DETERMINATION: ☐ Exempt ☒ DNS ☐ EIS

☒ DNS with conditions

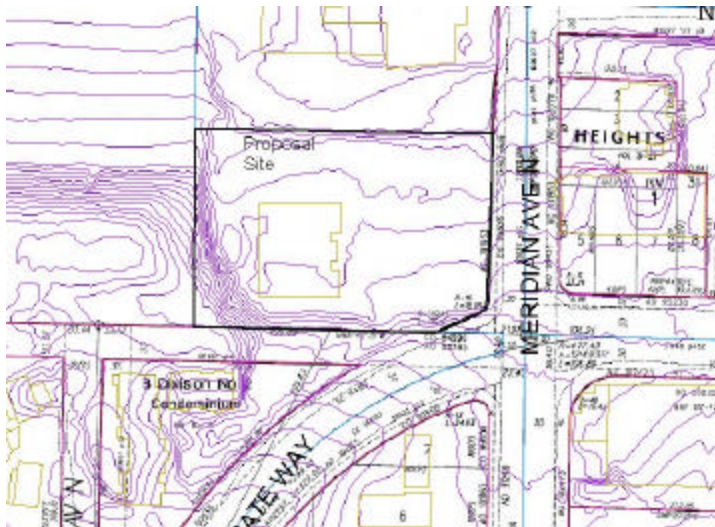
☐ DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND DATA

Site and Vicinity Description

The proposal site, at the northwest corner of Meridian Ave. N. and N. Northgate Way is zoned NC3-40' and is within the Northgate Zoning Overlay boundary. The site is located approx. 600 feet west of the I-5 freeway and marks the westernmost extent of the Northgate commercial area. To the west topography drops off and multi-family residential uses are present in addition to a large cemetery at the west property line which extends to the west and northwest. Directly north of the site is a surface parking lot and bank building. A slope of greater than 40% situated at the southwest corner of the site has been granted a limited ECA exemption as a legally created slope not part of a large slope system. The remainder of the site is essentially flat. On the cemetery property west of the subject site there is a wetland which was enhanced in connection to an enforcement action by DPD and a negotiated settlement. The buffer for this wetland does not extend onto the subject site.

Along the south property line of the proposal site is an unimproved, 33 foot wide, segment of N. 110th St. into which merges the improved N. Northgate Way. The intersection of Meridian Ave. N. and N. Northgate way is signalized. Fairly high volumes of traffic occur along both streets. Traffic queues past the site on Meridian Ave N. in the p.m. peak traffic period and traffic queues past the site on N. Northgate Way in the a.m. peak period.



Proposal

Proposed is a 69,854 sq. ft. three story, medical office building with parking for 331 vehicles, 277 of which are in an underground parking garage. Vehicle access to the site is proposed from two driveways; one from Meridian Ave. N. near the north property line, approximately 170 feet from the intersection with N. Northgate Way, and the other onto N. Northgate Way, approximately 120 feet from the same intersection. All parking areas are connected by internal ramps so that vehicles can enter or exit from either driveway.

Public Comment

The SEPA comment period for this application ended on April 21, 2004. A comment letter was received indicating there are existing high peak period traffic levels at the intersection of Meridian Ave. N. and N. Northgate Way and that there is a pond below and to the east of the project site which contributes water to Thornton Creek. Public comment focused upon design issues was also received at the design review public meetings.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD DESIGN PRIORITIES

On February 9, 2004 the Design Review Board for Area 1 met in a pre-design public meeting to consider the site and objectives of the applicant. After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines found in the City of Seattle's "*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings*" of highest priority to this project. The recommendations made were agreed to by all three of the Board members present, unless otherwise noted.

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics - The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation, and views or other features.

The southeast corner of the site is prominent both because it is at a busy street intersection and because the site is a few feet above sidewalk grade at the intersection. As such this corner is prominent and, as recognized in the several options shown by the applicant, calls for a particularly clear, strong architectural and landscape expression.

At the southwest corner topography is dropping away from the building. Any retaining walls along this side should be carefully placed, designed and landscaped to create a visually interesting and integrated design.

A-2 Streetscape compatibility - The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

The project will largely set a standard and, hopefully, a desirable context to be achieved by others in the immediate area.

A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street - Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

A-4 Human Activity - New Development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

The building alternatives shown seem to suffer a bit and form a disconnect between the architectural expression, which suggests a building entry, and the actual main pedestrian entry. The Board feels that the entry should be near the proposed vertical corner expression and the open space plaza feature at the

southeast corner. In any case, there is an opportunity to use landscape to bring pedestrians in from the street. Use landscaping creates an area of respite, visible and accessible from the public realm, but apart from it.

A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access - - Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

The Board thought the vehicle access arrangement proposed was a good one allowing access from both adjacent arterials and internal connection between them. A traffic study and consideration within the City should consider safe operation of these driveways and that of the adjacent signalized intersection.

A-9 Location of Parking on Commercial Street Fronts – Parking on a commercial street front should be minimized and where possible should be located behind a building.

The preferred scheme, with the building placed out to the corner, is the only one which accomplishes this objective.

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency - Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

C-3 Human Scale - The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials - Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

The Board thought the brick and glass concept for the building architecture is a good one. The quality of materials and sense of permanence which the brick provides will help create a high level of architectural form. Human scale should be achieved around the base of the building in the pedestrian and landscaped areas.

D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances - Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.

The public amenity open spaces proposed here, a courtyard and an urban garden are thought by the Board to provide an outstanding opportunity to achieve the objectives of this design guideline.

- D-3 Retaining Walls - Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.**

As there will be some retaining walls the Board observed that these should not be left blank.

- D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas - Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters can not be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.**

The Board would like a plan for inclusion of these areas into the project presented at the Recommendation Meeting.

- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site - Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen wall, planter, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.**
- E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions - The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as green belts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.**

The Board recognized and applauded the commitment of the developers and their design professionals to incorporate outstanding landscape design into the proposed project in ways that are directly accessible and visible to the public.

Development Standard Departures

No proposed development standard departures were identified at this first EDG meeting.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, recommended conditions, and reviewing the plans and renderings showing the proposed revisions, the Design Review Board members recommended **approval of the subject design** with the following **recommended condition** (all recommendations were by all five members agreeing, unless otherwise indicated. The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans submitted at that meeting. Design, siting, or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans available at the May 10, 2004 meeting and according to the recommendations of the Board at that meeting.

The Board Recommended the Following Condition:

1. The north façade of the building shall be modified to add more verticality and depth in the pilasters. A change in materials in the three bay elements could also be incorporated to obtain the desired result.

DECISION - DESIGN REVIEW

The Director of DPD has reviewed the recommendations of the Design Review Board and finds that they are consistent with the City of Seattle Design Review Guidelines for Multi-family and Commercial Structures. Therefore, the proposed design is **APPROVED** substantially as presented in the official plan sets on file with DPD as of the May 10, 2004 Design Review Board meeting, with the Board's recommended design **condition**, enumerated above.

ANALYSIS – ADMINISTRATIVE CONDITONAL USE

Section 23.47.006 of the Seattle Land Use Code provides the criteria to be applied in reviewing a proposal to locate a medical services use of over 10,000 sq. ft. within 2,500 feet of a medical Major Institution Overlay District boundary.

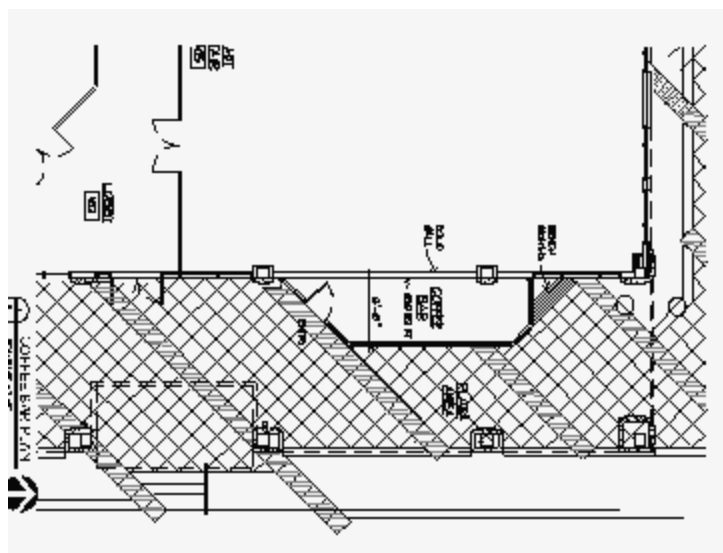
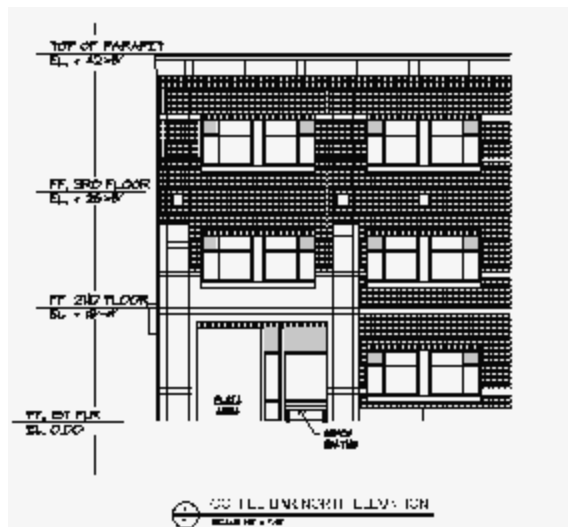
In making a determination whether to approve or deny a medical service use, the Director shall determine whether an adequate supply of commercially zoned land for businesses serving neighborhood residents will continue to exist. The following factors shall be used in making this determination:

- a. *Whether the amount of medical service use development existing and proposed in the vicinity would reduce the current viability or significantly impact the longer-term potential of the neighborhood serving character of the commercial area; and*

The proposal site is in the northwest “corner” of the Northgate business area stretching for many blocks to the east. The nature of the site now, with a topographic change upward and a building setback from the street, isolates it from the surrounding area. The proposed building would much better relate to the street with a front door and landscaped public amenity both in close relation with the sidewalk grade. The area is not now characterized by medical service offices, but, is instead highly commercial with service stations, restaurants, hotels, offices, customer service offices, etc. The addition of the proposed use would be expected to have no noticeable affect upon the neighborhood serving character of the commercial area.

- b. *Whether medical service use development would displace existing neighborhood-serving commercial uses at street level or disrupt a continuous commercial street front, particularly of retail and personal services uses, or significantly detract from an area's overall neighborhood-serving commercial character.*

The long vacant Barnaby's restaurant building has no street level connection to the neighborhood whereas the proposed building has been designed through the City's design review process and in accordance with the Northgate Overlay District zoning provisions to have just such a street level connection and, in fact, positive contribution to the character of pedestrian experience. While the proposal is for an office building, its street presence and connection is well designed. It should provide a pleasant architectural addition to the commercial area. In order to insure that the new building and its uses do not detract significantly from the neighborhood serving commercial character of the area; the project will be conditioned to require the addition of a coffee and snack bar, enclosed and heated so as to allow all season use, in order to provide a service to users of the building and increase the human presence and activity in front of the building on the eastern side. This coffee and snack bar use is to remain open for the life of the project. This addition shall be designed so as to unobtrusively blend with the building architecture substantially as shown in the drawings below.



In addition to the use specific criteria, conditional uses shall meet the following:

The use shall be determined not to be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property in the zone or vicinity in which the property is located.

The proposal site is improved with a large restaurant building surrounded by a surface parking. It has been empty for a number of years. The site is relatively isolated from the surrounding area as it sits above street level with a parking lot between the sidewalk, the corner and the restaurant building. Creation of a new building with pedestrian connections to the sidewalk and corner and with a viable use serving the surrounding area would be a benefit to the surrounding commercial area. The residentially zoned areas to the west and northwest would not be expected to be impacted by the new uses at the site as the site, is isolated by topography.

DECISION – ADMINISTRATIVE CONDITIONAL USE

CONDITIONALLY APPROVED.

ANALYSIS - SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the environmental checklist submitted by the applicant and dated March 1, 2004, and annotated by this Department. This information in the checklist, supplemental information provided by the applicant (plans, including landscape plans, traffic report, drainage report, soils report, DPD approved ECA Limited Steep Slope Exemption), comments from members of the community, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar projects form the basis for this analysis and decision.

The SEPA Overview Policy (SMC 25.05.665) establishes the relationship between codes, policies, and environmental review. Specific policies for specific elements of the environment, certain neighborhood plans, and other policies explicitly referenced may serve as the basis for exercising substantive SEPA authority. The Overview Policy states in part:

"where City regulations have been adopted to address an environmental impact, it shall be presumed that such regulations are adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation (subject to some limitations)."

Under certain limitations/circumstances (SMC 25.05.665 D 1-7) mitigation can be considered. Thus, a more detailed discussion of some of the impacts is cited below.

Short - Term Impacts

Anticipated short-term impacts that could occur during demolition excavation and construction include; increased noise from construction/demolition activities and equipment; decreased air quality due to suspended particulates from building activities and hydrocarbon emissions from construction vehicles and equipment; increased dust caused by construction activities; potential soil erosion and potential disturbance to subsurface soils during grading, excavation, and general site work; increased traffic and demand for parking from construction equipment and personnel; conflicts with normal pedestrian and vehicular movement adjacent to the site; increased noise; and consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources. Due to the temporary nature and limited scope of these impacts, they are not considered significant (SMC 25.05.794).

Many are mitigated or partially mitigated by compliance to existing codes and ordinances; specifically these are: Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code (grading, site excavation and soil erosion); Street Use Ordinance (watering streets to suppress dust, removal of debris, and obstruction of the pedestrian right-of-way); the Building Code (construction measures in general); and the Noise Ordinance (construction noise). The Department finds, however, that certain construction-related impacts warrant further discussion below.

Drainage

The existence of the wetland area directly west of and down hill from the subject site presents an area of particular sensitivity requiring a higher than normal degree of protection during the extensive excavation, paving and other construction activities proposed. The existing vegetated slope directly above the wetland is proposed to be extensively disturbed and replaced with a combination of slope and retaining wall. Also, the site will create stormwater runoff which will have to be managed throughout the construction phases. For construction permitting the applicants will be required to show measures to be employed to contain and manage erosion and stormwater runoff from the site. The Seattle Stormwater and Grading Control Ordinance is sufficient to require these measures to be devised and employed during the construction phase. No further conditioning pursuant to SEPA policies is warranted.

Long - Term Impacts

Long-term or use-related impacts are also anticipated from the proposal and include: increased surface water runoff from greater site coverage by impervious surfaces; potentially decreased water quality in surrounding watersheds; increased ambient noise due to increased human activity; increased demand on public services and utilities; increased light and glare; increased energy consumption, increased on-street parking demand, and increased vehicle traffic. These long-term impacts are not considered significant because the impacts are minor in scope.

The potentially most substantial long-term impacts are traffic and additional consideration of this is warranted.

Parking

The proposal included 331 on-site parking stalls, 277 of them in the parking garage and 54 on the surface to the north and west of the building. The Seattle Land Use Code would require 190 parking spaces. The Institute of Transportation Engineers in their publication Parking Generation, based upon survey information from multiple locations, estimates a parking demand for medical offices of 4.11 per 1,000 sq. ft. of the use, or, in this case 284 parking spaces. The applicants have, at 331 spaces, proposed enough parking spaces to avoid any expected overflow off the site.

Stormwater

Stormwater is proposed to be stored in a detention tank sized for a 100 year storm event and tight lined to the existing city drainage system in Meridian Ave. N. The Drainage Summary provided in the expanded SEPA checklist for the project states “A small area of the parking lot cannot gravity flow to the storm system. This area will be piped to an infiltration trench.” Stormwater review of the building permit application will require evidence that infiltration will adequately accommodate the volumes anticipated.

Light and Glare

The wetland and steep slope area to the west of the site provides wildlife habitat for many animals with nocturnal behavior. Light spilled from the proposal site into the area could reasonably be expected to negatively impact the wildlife functions of the area. To insure that light from the proposal does not trespass into the natural area to the west it is necessary to condition the project to require full cut off parking lot light fixtures and shielded fixtures on other areas of the site which limit light trespass to the west to the greatest extent reasonably possible.

Traffic and Transportation

The Traffic and Parking study found in the expanded checklist predicts the proposed project would generate 1,590 new daily, 168 new a.m. peak trips and 179 new p.m. peak trips on an average weekday. During the p.m. peak period the directional split would be 23 inbound (13%) and 156 outbound (87%). Additionally, it is predicted that the majority of trips (55%) would arrive from the east on Northgate Way/110th St with 25 % north and 20% south via I-5/ramps and 10% from Northgate Mall area and destination east (Lake City Way). An estimated 20%, it is predicted, would arrive/depart from the north on Meridian which includes a 10% component from SR-99 using 115th Street. The prediction is that the remaining 25% would arrive via Meridian Avenue/College Way (915%) from the south or Northgate Way (10%) from the west. The level of service of nearby intersections are not predicted to drop to unacceptable levels.

Queuing of southbound traffic on Meridian Ave. N. and the intersection with N.E. Northgate Way/110th St. is expected during peak periods to extend north past the proposed driveway into the proposal site. The traffic report concluded that these queues will clear during most signal cycles and permit left-turn inbound and outbound movements with some delay during peak periods. This conclusion has been reviewed by persons with traffic expertise at both DPD and SDOT and, while accepted, the situation

may require, at some future date, installation of a “c-curb” of other measures to prevent left turns into and out of the site at the Meridian Ave. driveway. If it is found that the driveway operations do negatively affect roadway operations, SDOT will take measures which restrict left turns to and from the driveway on Meridian.

The driveway proposed to access Northgate Way cannot safely be used for left turn movements in either the inbound or outbound directions. This conclusion is supported in the traffic report information of the expanded SEPA checklist and has been confirmed in consultation with SDOT staff. As a result it is necessary to condition the project to require the project proponents to install, prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, a c-curb in the Northgate Way right-of-way (pursuant to an SDOT permit) sufficient to prevent left turn movements to and from the driveway from the site on this street.

The Seattle Land Use Code in section 23.71.018 requires that the owner of this proposed project prepare and implement a Transportation Management Plan (“TMP”). That section provides the goals in terms of trip reduction to be met by the TMP and other details. DPD Director’s Rule 14-2002 provides additional information, provisions and requirements for TMPs. It will be necessary that the TMP for this proposed project be created and approved prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

Other Impacts

Several adopted Codes and Ordinances and other Agencies will appropriately mitigate the other use-related adverse impacts created by the proposal. Specifically, these are the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (increased airborne emissions); and the Seattle Energy Code (long-term energy consumption). The other impacts not noted here as mitigated by codes, ordinances, or conditions (increased ambient noise; increased pedestrian traffic, increased demand on public services and utilities) are not sufficiently adverse to warrant further mitigation by conditions.

DECISION - SEPA

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirement of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21.C), including the requirement to inform the public of agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

- [X] Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).
- [] Determination of Significance. This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).

CONDITIONS - SEPA

Prior to Issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy

1. The project proponents shall install, prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, a c-curb in the Northgate Way right-of-way (pursuant to an SDOT permit) sufficient to prevent left turn movements to and from the site driveway on this street.

For The Life of the Project

2. Pole lighting in and around surface parking areas shall use full cut off light fixtures and other outdoor lighting shall use fixtures which shield and otherwise limit light trespass to the greatest extent reasonably possible.

CONDITION – ADMINISTRATIVE CONDITIONAL USE

3. There shall be, for the life of the project, a coffee and snack bar, enclosed and heated so as to allow all season use in front of the building on the eastern side substantially as shown in the drawings show in the Conditional Use analysis above. This coffee and snack bar use will be kept open for the life of the project.

CONDITIONS – DESIGN REVIEW

4. The north façade of the building shall be modified to add more verticality and depth in the pilasters. The applicant/builders shall consider making a change in materials in the three bay elements to obtain this desired result.

Non-Appealable Conditions

5. Create and receive DPD approval of a Transportation Management Plan meeting the requirements of SMC 23.71.018 and DR 14-2002 prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the building.
6. Any proposed changes to the exterior of the building or the site or must be submitted to DPD for review and approval by the Land Use Planner (Scott Kemp, 206.233.3866). Any proposed changes to the improvements in the public right-of-way must be submitted to DPD and SDOT for review and for final approval by SDOT.
7. Compliance with all images and text on the MUP drawings, design review meeting guidelines and approved design features and elements (including exterior materials, landscaping and ROW

improvements) shall be verified by the DPD planner assigned to this project (Scott Kemp, 206.233.3866), or by the Design Review Manager. An appointment with the assigned Land Use Planner must be made at least (3) working days in advance of field inspection. The Land Use Planner will determine whether submission of revised plans is required to ensure that compliance has been achieved.

8. Embed all of these conditions in the cover sheet for updated MUP permit plans and for all subsequent permits including any MUP revisions, and all building permits.
9. Embed the 11 x 17 colored elevation drawings from the DR Recommendation meeting and as updated, into the MUP plans prior to issuance, and also embed these colored elevation drawings into the Building Permit Plan set in order to facilitate subsequent review of compliance with Design Review.

Signature: _____ (signature on file) Date: November 15, 2004
Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner

SK:bg

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